

Message Text

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SUBJECT: RELGIOUS FREEDOM IN UGANDA

REF: BONN 15676

THE FRG EMBASSY HAS CABLED THE FOLLOWING REPORT TO THE
FONOFF ON THE RESTRICTIONS ON AND PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM IN UGANDA.

BEGIN TEXT:

(1) PRESIDENT AMIN, ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1977, BANNED 27
SMALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND SECTS (SUCH AS THE
SALVATION ARMY, THE ADVENTISTS, THE BAPTISTS AND THE
JEWISH FAITH) ON THE HARDLY CONVINCING GROUNDS THAT
THEY ENDANGER SECURITY, PEACE AND WELFARE IN UGANDA.
IMMEDIATELY AFFECTED ARE A NUMBER OF AMERICAN
MISSIONARIES. THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF UGANDA (34
PERCENT OF THE POPULATION), THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
(28 PERCENT), THE MUSLIMS (8 PERCENT) AND THE ORTHODOX
(2 PERCENT) WERE NOT AFFECTED.

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THUS FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO INTERFERENCE WITH THE
SERVICES AND OTHER RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, SUCH AS RELIGIOUS
TEACHING, IN THE TWO MAJOR CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. THEIR
FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT HAS BEEN LIMITED MERELY BY THE
NON-ISSUANCE OF EXIT PERMITS TO LOCAL PRIESTS AND THE
NON-EXTENSION OF THE RESIDENCE PERMITS GRANTED WHITE
MISSIONARIES. THUS FAR AMIN'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE

SPRING OF 1977 THAT HE WOULD STOP FOREIGN AID TO THE CHURCHES IN UGANDA HAS NOT BEEN REALIZED. THE UGANDAN CHURCHES CONTINUE TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL AID FROM EUROPE BOTH FOR PURELY RELIGIOUS PROJECTS AND FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

(2) THE BAN OF 27 RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES CONSTITUTES A GRAVE LIMITATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN UGANDA. AT BEST, IT IS A REPETITION OF SIMILAR ORDINANCES IN 1973, 1975 AND 1976 WHICH WERE HARDLY HEEDED AND WERE FINALLY FORGOTTEN. HOWEVER, THIS BAN MAY SIGNAL A CHANGE IN IDI AMIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, WHICH HAS THUS FAR BEEN MARKED BY RELATIVE TOLERANCE.

AMIN IS NO FANATIC MUSLIM. HE SUPPORTED THE PROPAGANDA AND MISSIONARY CAMPAIGN OF THE MUSLIMS THAT BEGAN YEARS AGO NOT SO MUCH FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS AS FOR WINNING THE GOODWILL AND ECONOMIC AID OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE TAKEN THE PLACE OF THE WESTERN COUNTRIES AS LARGE DONORS.

MORE RIGID ACTION AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES MAY FORCE MEMBERS OF THE ANGLICAN AND CATHOLIC CHURCHES, WHO FEEL HARASSED BY THE CAMPAIGN OF THE MUSLIMS ANYWAY, TO BAND CLOSER TOGETHER. SUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A DEVELOPMENT MIGHT PROVOKE AMIN TO DRASTIC MOVES AGAINST THE BIG CHRISTIAN CHURCHES WHICH, ACCORDING TO PAST EXPERIENCES IN UGANDA, WOULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT BLOODSHED. FROEWIS.

END TEXT.
STOESSEL

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